



Presents
State of Nature

Devised by Vincent de Repentigny, Maude Arès & Gabriel Plante

World Premiere February 5, 2017 at the Monument-National, Montreal

Study guide created by Rhiannon Collett

Available in PDF at youtheatre.ca



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Montréal



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Founded in 1968, Youtheatre's main goals and artistic objectives are stated in its current mandate:

Youtheatre's aim is to engage its audience through compelling theatre that provokes, questions, challenges and entertains. Our major area of focus is the creation, development and production of new works for young people by the finest Canadian playwrights.

More recently, work such as *The Pencil Project* and *Dreaming Now* reflect Artistic Director Michel Lefebvre's current preoccupation with new media. By integrating new technologies, he hopes to make theatre for young audiences relevant and contemporary.

Each year, the company produces work for local audiences and frequently tours nationally and internationally. Since 2000, Youtheatre has also been successfully producing work in French.

Youtheatre has performed at many important venues in Canada including the National Arts Centre, Young People's Theatre, Grand Theatre, Imperial Theatre, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Théâtre la Catapulte and Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario in Sudbury.

On an international level, Youtheatre has performed at The Birmingham Rep, Unity Theatre, Sherman Theatre and The Grand Theatre in Swansea, Wales.

Youtheatre operates under the jurisdiction of both the (CAEA) Canadian Actors' Equity Association and (UDA) Union des artistes and is a member of (PACT) Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, (TUEJ) Théâtres Unis Enfance Jeunesse and (QDF) Quebec Drama Federation.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is meant to be used as a starting point for discussions and to encourage students to get the most out of their experience. We recommend that students be introduced to the show's themes before viewing the production. The discussion topics and post-show activities should follow the performance in order to enhance the students' complete understanding of the subjects involved. Feel free to adapt the activities to suit your students and your goals as a teacher. You may photocopy any of the material in this guide.





STATE OF NATURE PRODUCTION TEAM

Devised by	Vincent de Repentigny Maude Arès Gabriel Plante
Performed by	5 students
Facilitated by	An animator A stage manager

SYNOPSIS

Based on the myth of Robinson Crusoe, *State of Nature* is an interdisciplinary, interactive piece, performed on an inflatable sculpture. ***If you could construct a new world, would you re-create the society you already live in? Or would you imagine something new?*** *State of Nature* asks its teen audience to imagine what their ideal society would look like.

A stage manager and an animator will facilitate *State of Nature*.

Five students will be pre-selected with the teacher's help – they will be given noise cancelling headphones that communicate to them a series of tasks they must accomplish to survive on the desert island (which is the set of the show). They will build a society in front of their peers.

At the same time, an animator will be interacting with the larger student body, who will be listening to a story that is related to the show they're watching their peers perform.

The students will then have to make a connection between the narrative and the physical story playing out in front of them.

The show will conclude with a talkback/group discussion about the show.



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

English Language Arts

Robinson Crusoe is a novel by Daniel Defoe, originally published in 1719. The novel details the life of Robinson Crusoe, a castaway who is shipwrecked on an island for 28 years. Early on, the novel focuses on Crusoe's survival and isolation, before moving on to more Christian themes of repentance and spiritual redemption - an escaped prisoner who Crusoe names "Friday" is taught English and converted to Christianity.

The novel is thought to have been based off life of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish castaway who survived for many years on an island off the coast of Chile. Originally thought to be an autobiographical account of life as a castaway, *Robinson Crusoe* is often considered to be the first English novel – Defoe's work was at the forefront of realistic fiction.

A genre was born: the robinsonade - defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as a "fictitious narrative of often fantastic adventures in real or imaginary distant places; especially: a story of the adventures of a person marooned on a desert island." In 298 years, the novel has had 700+ spin-offs, in various forms - novels, movies, television shows and video games.

A Robinsonade Timeline:

- 1812: *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Johann David Wyss)
- 1874: *The Mysterious Island* (Jules Verne)
- 1984: *The Jungle Book* (Rudyard Kipling)
- 1896: *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (H. G. Wells)
- 1902: *The Admirable Crichton* (J. M. Barrie)
- 1954: *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)
- 1960: *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (Scott O'Dell, 1960)
- 1964 – 1967: *Gilligan's Island* (TV Series)
- 1965 – 1968: *Lost in Space* (TV Series)
- 1967: *The Other Side of The Mountain* (Michel Beranos)
- 1980: *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (Jean M. Auel)
- 1987: *Hatchet* (Gary Paulsen)
- 1994: *The Island of the Day Before* (Umberto Eco)
- 2000 – present: *Survivor* (TV Series)

A Robinsonade Timeline (cont)

2001: *Life of Pi* (Yann Martel)
 2003: *Oryx and Crake* (Margaret Atwood, 2003)
 2004 – 2010: *Lost* (TV Series)
 2005 – 2007: *Flight 29 Down* (TV Series)
 2007: *The Stone Gods* (Jeanette Winterson)
 2008: *Nation* (Terry Pratchett)
 2015: *The Martian* (Movie)

Sources :

[<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/30/100-best-books-robinson-crusoe>]
 [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinsonade#Examples>]

Activity I:

Individually, write your own Robinsonade based off the definition and examples on page 5. Use this sheet to outline your story: make sure it has a beginning, middle, an end and a conflict.

Choose a type of conflict :

Person vs. Self
 Person vs. Person
 Person vs. Society
 Person vs. Nature
 Person vs. Fate/Supernatural

Beginning

How does your character arrive at the island? What resources do they have with them? What resources do they have to find?

Middle

Does your character manage to establish a shelter? What struggles do they encounter on the island? Are they alone or are there other people or animals there? What is your **main conflict**?

End

Does your character remain on the island forever? Do they run out of food? Do they start a new society? How do they change over the course of the story? What do they learn?

Now, on a separate piece of paper, write your story.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

English Language Arts & Social Sciences

State of Nature is a performance that asks us to examine our interactions and relationships with others. It imagines a brand new world, the dawn of humankind, and the appearance of a new group of humans on a desert island. Will these individuals re-create an existing system (the world we now live in) or will they imagine a new state of being?

Lord of The Flies, by William Golding, is a classic robinsonade that explores many of the same questions, but with disastrous results.

Lord of The Flies – A Study in Psychology by K. M. Parivelan

As a novelist, William Golding developed a unique style characterized by simplicity and economy of expression. He deliberately refrained from excessive narration and consistent characterization.

His first novel, *Lord of the Flies* was published in 1957. The work features a group of schoolboys abandoned in an island and forced to survive without adult supervision. Initially the boys attempt to organize themselves on the lines of their parent civilization.

Later, they transform to a more primitive societal pattern dominated by blood-thirst, cruelty, aggression and rituals. The underlying theme of the work is ‘end of innocence’.

In many ways, the novel has a fable-orientation, conveying morals allegorically, the most fundamental being the ‘darkness of man’s heart’. The author’s psychological insights are brought to fore by concise depiction of perverted behaviour and degrading moral standards.

The four major characters, Jack, Ralph, Piggy and Simon, represent passion, will, reason and conscious respectively. On the basis of this ‘human-self’ analysis, Golding explores the mutual interactions of various characters.

The revelations underline the basic antagonisms of human nature. The author firmly believes humans must learn to live with the chaos of existence without attempting to reshape it towards his means or ends.

While humans cannot alter their nature, Golding feels, they can certainly be conscious of it. And it is this consciousness, according to him, that contains the supreme achievement and delight of being a human being.

A study of the psychological insights in the *Lord of the Flies* clearly underlines the degeneration of virtuous characters into diabolic. Golding’s reflections on the darkness in human nature emerge life-like in his analysis of the microcosm of the unknown island.

The work characterizes Golding’s underlying theme ‘humans produce evil as a bee produces honey’. In all his works the author has relentlessly pursued the objective of making humans face ‘the sad fact of his own cruelty and lust’ and has upheld the conviction ‘human are fallen beings’.

The fact that humans are gripped by original sin and are in an inherently perilous state justifies evil and its innate fusion with human existence.

Source : [K. M. Parivelan : <https://learningandcreativity.com/lord-of-the-flies/>]



English Language Arts & Social Sciences (cont.)

“Initially the boys attempt to organize themselves on the lines of their parent civilization.”

What does your civilization look like? In a group of four students, initiate a discussion about common societal rules and values. What systems are we as a society apart of? As a group, make a list of rules you’re not permitted to break, and then discuss : how and why are these rules enforced? Who enforces them?

School Rules

i.e. I am not allowed to go off campus at lunch.

Home Rules

i.e. I must do the dishes before I go to bed.

Societal Rules

i.e. Shoplifting is wrong and punishable by the law.



Now, open up the discussion to the following questions :

What structures keep our society from dissenting into chaos?

Are they effective from your point of view?

Do you think the police are an effective way of monitoring the public?

What do you think would happen if none of these rules were enforced?

Do you think our current three-tiered system of government works- municipal, provincial, federal?

Do you think people are inherently good or bad?

Activity 2 :

Consider this statement from the essay provided on page 8 :

Humans must learn to live with the chaos of existence without attempting to reshape it towards their means or ends.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Using two current events, your group discussion about societal structure and/or the novel *Lord of The Flies*, craft a thesis and write an essay agreeing OR disagreeing with this statement.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

Social Sciences

Group Psychology in Teenagers

Teenagers are often used as a microcosm (definition: a situation that has the same characteristics of something much larger) for the rest of humanity – literature like *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding exemplifies this case. Several major tenants of social psychology are at play when it comes to group dynamics – social interactions are heightened in teens and young adults (12-21) whose brains are still in development. See below for definitions:

EVALUATION APPREHENSION

Evaluation apprehension refers to the experience of being anxious about being negatively evaluated or not positively evaluated. It is the concern for how others are evaluating us.

SOCIAL FACILITATION

The presence of others evokes a generalized drive state characterized by increased readiness and arousal; being around others increases our performance.

Do you ever experience evaluation apprehension? If so, where? In school? On sports teams? Socially? Explain.

Do you think of yourself as a competitive person? Do you work better in groups or alone? Do you strive to out-do your peers? Does this make you work harder?

Group Dynamics in Teenagers (cont.)

GROUP POLARIZATION

Group polarization refers to the tendency for a group to make decisions that are more extreme than the initial inclination of its members.

DEINDIVIDUATION

Deindividuation refers to **loss** of **self-awareness** and **evaluation apprehension**; occurs in **group** situations that foster responsiveness to group norms, good or bad.

GROUPTHINK

Groupthink is an exaggerated example of group-polarization. Groupthink occurs when an amiable, cohesive group exists, there is relative isolation of the group from disagreeing or different viewpoints, and there exists a directive leader who signals what decision she or he favours. Several processes occur within the group:

They tend to overestimate their invulnerability.

There is an unquestioned belief in the group's morality.

Group members rationalize their decisions and behaviour and close off their minds to other possibilities.

They tend to view their 'opponent' through stereotypes that the other person is too weak or unintelligent to defend themselves against the planned initiative.

There is pressure to conform to the group.

People censor their disagreements, which creates an illusion of unanimity.

Some members of the group become mind "guards" and protect the group from information that would call into question the effectiveness or mortality of its decisions.

How does being a part of a group make you feel? As compared to being an individual?

Group Dynamics in Teenagers (cont.)

Have you ever been a part of a group of friends who make radical decisions you might not make alone?

Think about situations when you've been a part of a group. Have you ever experienced groupthink or deindividuation? Are there any stories of groupthink you've heard of in the news?

Sources :

[<http://www.lepageassociates.com/pdf/teenviolence.pdf>]

[<https://www.psychology-lexicon.com>]

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

History & Citizenship Education

When *Robinson Crusoe* was first published, the author, William Defoe, referred to it in the preface as a “a just History of Fact” - because of this, many of the readers thought the novel was a factual autobiography, written by Crusoe himself. *Robinson Crusoe* has been cited as the “prototypical modern realistic novel”; its seemingly historical elements were a key part of the British Empire’s dissemination of both colonial / imperialist ideology and the concept of middle-class individualism in the early 18th century. Crusoe is the myth of a European creating a fiefdom for himself on a non-European island - man conquers nature: man colonises and indoctrinates a “savage” population into Christianity.

Using a dictionary, define the following in your own words :

Imperialism

Colonialism

Individualism

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following question:

Do you think colonialism is present in Canadian culture? If yes, explain how and why. If no, explain why you believe Canada to be a non-colonial country.

Source : [<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/30/100-best-books-robinson-crusoe>]

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

History and Citizenship Education

Indigenous Studies

Historical Primer by *Shauna Johnson, UBC*

In Canada and the United States, there is a long, dire history of colonization that has impacted indigenous peoples in many ways. While history books highlight famous white explorers and celebrated major events such as the discovery of ‘New Lands’, keep in mind that narratives told in the text books tell one side of the story; the story that the Europeans, as the all ‘superior humans’ chose to put in the history books (King, 2012). When we talk about history, we talk about stories of the past. These stories have been organized into agreed upon events and interpretations that tell how “we” got from here to there. The problem with this is that those who held the most power chose the stories that were to become a part of history. History is a tool to tell stories about how they became powerful and how the powerful use that power to remain in power. So when it comes to the oral histories of indigenous peoples, many of the narratives were discounted, ignored, and erased from history by altering or not acknowledging the accounts of indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012) (King, 2012).

One reason behind this may originate back to the Papal Bulls of discovery, a doctrine in the 15th century that granted catholic explorers full authority to convert, subjugate, remediate, and forcefully remove indigenous peoples from their land. If they refused, they were authorized to enslave and kill them as a way to save their souls (Miller et al, 2010). It was the belief that those who embraced Christianity were more human or superior beings than those who didn’t, and thus incapable of having their own legal, economic or political institutions to govern themselves. In short, indigenous peoples were lesser humans, and therefore had inferior relationships/rights to land. This belief provided a foundation in which imperial laws were established, rationalizing and legitimizing and imperial assumption of power over indigenous lands and resources. Indigenous (as well as other systems of knowledge) were dismissed. Instead, western systems of knowledge were positioned as being superior and trumping all others (Smith, 2012).

Conceptualization of space is only one tool that was used to create three basic entities on paper to help shape and redefine the indigenous perspective of space: The line, centre and the outside. The line was used to create boundaries, map territories, to survey land and create properties, and to mark the limit of colonial powers. The centre was always focused on the colonial power, with everything else being oriented in relation to it. Everything outside the limits of power was considered irrelevant or non-existent (Smith, 2012).

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

History and Citizenship Education

Indigenous Studies

The concept of mapping has had a tremendous impact upon indigenous peoples for centuries. Since it was first developed, the indigenous ways of orienting themselves on their lands were redefined. As soon as lines were drawn on maps by European hands, indigenous place names, which are intricately connected with indigenous history, stories, and teachings, were replaced with English names, erasing indigenous presence from the lands. Traditional homelands were divided and classified into different geographic features, properties and imperial nations states, dividing and separating indigenous families. Languages and cultural teachings were lost as children were forced to attend residential schools and learn western ways of knowing.

References:

King, Thomas (2012) *The Inconvenient Indian: A curious Account of Native People in North America*. Toronto: Random House Publishing.

Miller, Robert J., Jacinta Ruru, Larissa Behrendt, and Tracey Lindberg (2010). *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press. Ch. 4.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2012). *Decolonizing Indigenous Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Class Discussion Questions:

What are the difficulties when it comes to mapping Indigenous territories?

How does the modern idea of a 'nation-state' relate to Indigenous nations?

Who defines national boundaries, and who defines a nation?

What sources are being used, and what biases are in those sources?

How have colonial maps attempted to dispossess Indigenous people of their land?

Source : [<https://native-land.ca/teachers-guide.html>]

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

History and Citizenship Education

Indigenous Studies

Land Acknowledgements

In order for us to acknowledge and be accountable for the imperialism and colonialism that our country was built upon, we have to take time to understand who the traditional caretakers of the land are.

1. In a group of four students, and using the following resources, choose **one** provincial capital, and research what traditional lands that major city occupies. Then, write a paragraph about which indigenous nation(s) are the traditional caretaker(s) of the land, and what natural resources are culturally significant to them.

<https://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/professional-advice/list---territorial-acknowledgement-by-province.pdf?sfvrsn=12>

<https://native-land.ca/>

2. When you're done, present your research to the class - be sure that you have the correct pronunciation for the nation you're researching. Before you present your research to the class, start with a land acknowledgement (you can find them in the link above).

i.e. "I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. My group chose Vancouver, which lies traditional land of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and Tsleil-Waututh Nations."

Victoria

Edmonton

Regina

Winnipeg

Toronto

Ottawa

Whitehorse

Quebec City

Fredericton

Halifax

Charlottetown

St John's

Yellowknife

Iqaluit

ANNEX I

Relevant Reading List

Lord of The Flies by William Golding

Grade 11+

A plane crashes on an uninhabited island and the only survivors, a group of schoolboys, assemble on the beach and wait to be rescued. By day they inhabit a land of bright birds and dark blue seas, but at night they are haunted and their delicate sense of order fades...

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

Grade 11+

After deciding to sell their zoo in India and move to Canada, Santosh and Gita Patel board a freighter with their sons and a few remaining animals. Tragedy strikes when a terrible storm sinks the ship, leaving the Patels' teenage son, Pi, as the only human survivor. However, Pi is not alone; a fearsome Bengal tiger has also found refuge aboard the lifeboat. As days turn into weeks and weeks drag into months, Pi and the tiger must learn to trust each other if both are to survive.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Grade 9 +

Brian Robertson, sole passenger on a Cessna 406, is on his way to visit his father when the tiny bush plane crashes in the Canadian wilderness. With nothing but his clothing, a tattered windbreaker, and the hatchet his mother had given him as a present, Brian finds himself completely alone. Challenged by his fear and despair – and plagued with the weight of a dreadful secret he's been keeping since his parent's divorce – Brian must tame his inner demons in order to survive. It will take all his know-how and determination, and more courage than he knew he possessed.

The Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

Grade 9+

Far off the coast of California looms a harsh rock known as San Nicolas Island. Blue dolphins splash in the water surrounding it, sea otters play in the kelp beds, and seabirds roost in its crags. Once, Indigenous people also lived on the island – until one day they decided to leave and sailed to the east.

A young girl was left behind.

Karana is that girl. Year after year she waits for the ship to come back. But it never does. Finally, she realizes that she must make a fateful choice : follow her people on her own or remain alone on the island for the rest of her life.

ANNEX II Teacher Questionnaire

STATE OF NATURE 2017-2018 Season

Your name: _____

School's name: _____

Age of students: _____

1- What were your students' impressions of the show?

2- Did you think the production was valid from an educational perspective?

3- Artistic Quality

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Animators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Set Design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Audiovisual Design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please comment:

ANNEX II

Teacher Questionnaire

4- Did you experience any problems (i.e. scheduling, punctuality)?

5- Did you use the Study Guide that was provided by Youtheatre? YES _____ NO _____
Why or why not?

6- Would you book Youtheatre again? YES _____ NO _____
Why or why not?

Additional comments:

**Please send your response by fax (514) 844-2330,
email education@youthatre.ca or mail it to
Youtheatre 5333 Casgrain #507, Montréal (QC) H2T 1X3**